



## **Critical Partnerships for Improved Tsunami Evacuations**

**Presented by:** Colby Stanton

**Presentation Abstract:** Day-to-day traffic congestion can become deadly when rapid evacuation is required. After a tsunami warning in Hawaii on 7/29/25 caused massive gridlock, HDOT recognized that although everyone was able to evacuate in time for this summer event, that might not be the case during the school year, when school-related traffic regularly contributes to congestion. After developing an innovative approach to assessing worst-case scenarios using purchased proprietary data, HDOT learned that 83-92% of the traffic on that day was not necessary for evacuation. After applying traffic management operations to the new baseline to determine the effectiveness of various mitigation strategies, HDOT concluded that traffic management alone is insufficient to ensure that all residents and visitors can evacuate by car in time for all worst-case scenarios. Building on existing relationships and creating new ones, HDOT is now working closely with emergency managers to integrate public outreach and interagency coordination with traffic management solutions to reduce traffic demands and optimize existing infrastructure to maximize the effectiveness of future tsunami evacuations.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understanding of potential applicability of proprietary data sources to hard questions
- Knowledge of how traffic systems management and operations techniques can be used to mitigate emergency situations
- Better understanding of how emergency managers and transportation professionals can partner to address shared issues

**Speaker Bio:** Colby Stanton joined the Hawaii Department of Transportation in 2025, but she has been an emergency manager for over 30 years. Previous roles include Director of Readiness at FEMA Region 9's Pacific Area Office (12 years) and various positions at the U.S. EPA (12 years), including On-Scene Coordinator and Director of the Center for Radiological Emergency Management. She has responded to disasters and emergencies in roles including Federal Coordinating Officer and Division Supervisor. Ms. Stanton holds a B.A. from Wellesley, an M.S. from CalTech, and an M.A. from the Naval Postgraduate School.